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Oltean, Anca

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version  
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Oltean, A. (2014). A few historiographical considerations with regard to the condition of Jews from Hungary and Romania in front of communism. *Annals of the University of Oradea - History-Archeology Series*, 24, 1-13. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-60500-9>

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## A Few Historiographical Considerations with regard to the Condition of Jews from Hungary and Romania in Front of Communism

Anca Oltean

**Abstract:** *The Jews of Romania and Hungary had to bear a lot of difficulties after the setting of communist regimes. This paper intends to present the Jewish minority rather as a victim of communism than a beneficiary. The communism was not favorable for their community and religious life, some Jewish elites were imprisoned and, also, the Zionist leaders. The memories presented here come up with a reference of victims of the totalitarianism. A view of ensemble of the Jewish minority in Romania and Hungary in the first years of communism is also drawn by this paper, based on the contemporary valuable historical writings.*

**Key words:** *Jews, minority, Romania, Hungary, communism*

In the article of Miklós Konrád<sup>1</sup> it is asserted that, after their emancipation from 1867, the Jews from Hungary ceased to exist as an independent entity. They accepted the assimilation to the Hungarian society from the wish of not suffering anymore because they are Jews. In the opinion of the author, it is well known the fact that the Jews from Hungary played an important role in economy, and Hungarian nationalism from the period of dualism could not be of antisemite nuances<sup>2</sup>. It took place a few minor incidents, but, in general, the role of the Jews was considered as being positive. In the same time, the author asserts that it was about an interest of the Jewry to integrate itself in the new state. On the other hand, the Jews had no interest to appear as *corpus separatum* because the integrationist tendencies of the Hungarian state which were advantageous for them. The emancipation offered to the Jews equal rights with the the Hungarians, the only difference residing in religion<sup>3</sup>. Also, under religious report, it existed differences between the Orthodox Jews and the Neologue Jews. The Orthodox faction rejected the assimilation of Hungarian society. They cultivated their traditions without getting involved in the political life and thus they did not constituted a danger for the Hungarian state: “Administration tolerated the fact that the Orthodox Jews refused to follow laws and decrees. In spite of the law that established the obligation of primary education, a lot of Jews very Orthodox from the counties from North- East preferred to send their children to illegal primary schools, *the heders*, in which, in contrast with the ones acknowledged there were taught in part laic subject matters. After all, in spite of a decree from 1884, which asked that the rabbis to be Hungarian citizens, and the law from 1895 foreseen that the education had to take place in Hungary, a number of Orthodox rabbis did not fulfill these conditions. But the political authorities were doing nothing to put into force these regulations<sup>4</sup>.

**Tabel 1. The Jews and the Hungarian state 1867- 2000<sup>5</sup>**

Regime	Habsbourg rule 1867- 1919	Horthy – Nazism rule 1920- 1945	Communism 1945- 1990	Post- communist rule 1990-
National state and the Jews	The Jews as a religion	The Jews as foreigners	De-iudaization and suprimation of particularisms	Jewish Diversity, religious, ethnic, cultural diversity
The dimension of	Civil rights in turn	Official anti-	Universalism	Pluralism

<sup>1</sup> Miklós Konrád, “Jews and politics in Hungary in the dualist era, 1867- 1914”, in *East European Jewish Affairs*, 39: 2, 167- 186, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13501670903016282>, accessed on 09/07/2010.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 167.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 168.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p.171.

<sup>5</sup> The table was detailed in Leonard Mars, *op.cit.*, p.229.

the politics of government	of cultural maghiarization - social contract	Semitism Hungarian particularism		
Effects on the Jews	Inclusion	Exclusion	A new start for survivors, but also the isolation from the Jewish past, of Israel and the outside world	Inclusion and elections.

In the study of Leonard Mars<sup>6</sup>, it was asserted that, today, there are about 100 000 of Jews in Hungary, most of them settled in Budapest<sup>7</sup>. After the end of communist regime, the life of the Jews from Hungary came back to normality, being characterized by a bright effervescence.

For the Hungarian Jews and for the ones from North-West of Transilvania, the coming of Red Army was a moment of liberation which put an end to deportations. In Romania and Hungary, the inhabitants feared of Soviet occupation. The different perception of Soviet occupant determined the fact that the Jews did not resent the communism as a yoke, at least at the beginning<sup>8</sup>. Raphael Patai shows that, in contrast with the Nazi genocide, the communist view with regard to the Jews was more permissive and non – violent. The Hungarian communists tried to assimilate the Jews, to make them faithful servants of Hungarian state, to give up to their Jewry, to those particular elements that separated the Jews from the Hungarians. If the Jews suffered more in the communist period, it can be explained by the fact that among them there were more bourgeois elements than among the Hungarians<sup>9</sup>. The Jewish life almost did not survive in Hungary after the war. The Hungarian Jews were often discriminated, the rebel ones or their economic and cultural elites were deported<sup>10</sup>, their emigration was prohibited or their community and religious life was destroyed<sup>11</sup>. In the view of the communists, the Jewish question was a product of capitalism and had no utility in the communist society. The communism tried to level cultural differences, to assimilate the national minorities.

On the other side, the cosmopolitan spirit of the Jews and their wish to keep the connection with other Jews from Israel and other countries of the free world were forbidden. The creation of Israel was perceived with enough reticence by the Hungarian communists and the situation became more hostile after the exacerbation of Stalinist anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe. As in Romania<sup>12</sup>, also in Hungary, the Zionist leaders were persecuted.

<sup>6</sup> Leonard Mars, "Is there a Religious Revival among Hungarian Jews today?" in *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 16: 2, 227-238, <http://dx.doi.org.10.1080/13537900120040681>, accessed in July 9, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 227.

<sup>8</sup> Raphael Patai, *The Jews of Hungary. History, culture, psychology*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1996, p.617.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 618.

<sup>10</sup> Nicholas Bauquet et François Bocholier (dir), *Le communisme et des élites en Europe Centrale*, Presses Universitaires de France, 2006, p. 25 shows the condition of interwar elites during the communism and the persecutions of whose victims they were. The interwar period time elites were the subject of the persecution of communist parties from Eastern Europe.

<sup>11</sup> Raphael Patai shows that the number of Hungarian Jews after Holocaust was 100 000. Gyurgyák János, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon (The Jewish Problem in Hungary)*, Osiris Kiadó, Budapest, 2001, p. 581 shows that, after the census of 1946, the number of Jews on the territory of Hungary was of 165. 330 of Jews, but he considers that the data are not complete because many Jews did not declared themselves as Jews, at least in the Province. The same author send us the data of the census of 1949 which registered 133, 862 of Hungarian citizens of Jewish religion among whom, says the author, 101. 259 lived in Budapest.

<sup>12</sup> Șitnovitzer Șlomo describes in his *memmories, Documentul autentic sau amintiri din închisorile comuniste din România ( The Authentic Document or memmories from the Communist Prisons from Romania)*, Tel Aviv, 2003, the sufferings by which he passed through when, at the end of the Stalinist years, he is put into prison and detained in prisons as a Zionist. Even if the Jews were allowed the emigration in Israel, the Zionist leaders who fought for this were imprisoned. The same was the situation in Hungary.

In the study of John Kosa<sup>13</sup> it is asserted that it had been existed a significant number of Jewish refugees after the war, and, after the year 1950, the Hungarian communists opposed to any emigration. After the Revolution of 1956, the boundaries opened only for a short time.

The Hungarian Jews that came from deportation were around of 160 000 – 190 000<sup>14</sup>. The returned Jews chose the assimilation in the new Hungarian state. They were attracted by the universalism and proletarian solidarity, promoted by communists. It is hard to understand why the Hungarian Jews were decided to collaborate with the Hungarians to the edification of socialist state, why they tried to assimilate when they suffered so much<sup>15</sup>. Maybe, because the installation of communism, meant for them the separation from an older past where the Jews were persecuted.

Stephen J. Roth<sup>16</sup> shows that in Hungary, after the war, it was implemented the material compensation of the Jews that suffered as a consequence of the Holocaust. The legislative basis, shows Roth, was the decree 200/ 1945 M.E. from March 17, 1945 which stipulated that the confiscations from the Fascist period were discriminatory and declared null the deprivations of rights. Still, the agricultural propriety and horticultural propriety was not given back if it entered under the provisions of Agrarian reform legislation and of the nationalization of the land. (Decree 600/ 1945 from March 15, 1945, Law VI from 1945). But also other goods could not be recuperated, such as mobile goods, equipments, the stocks of Jewish factories, the shops were destroyed, the money deposits lost their value as a consequence of the inflation, and the goods taken over by the Nazis were never given back. At November 15, 1946, it was created a National Jewish Fund of Rehabilitation that inherited the proprieties of the Jews that died in Holocaust that did not enter under the provisions of the above mentioned laws<sup>17</sup>.

In Hungary, after the war, the Jewish elements who survived, together with the communists who came out of illegality, put the basis of the new political regime. Initially, the number of Hungarian communists was very small 2000- 2500 of members<sup>18</sup>. The Communist Party had to divide the power with the other political parties (Social – democrats, Peasants Party- the intellectuality wing, etc). The Soviet occupation had dramatic consequences and was even more severe since the Soviets had numerous victims in the fight with Hungarians who were allies of Germany until the end of the war. In front of the nationalization of industry or of the agrarian reform, nobody protested<sup>19</sup>. The new system needed new personnel, trained in the field of education. The Jews were more cults than the Hungarians and corresponded for the jobs from state administration<sup>20</sup>. Moreover, they were new elements, uncompromised by the fascist regime and did correspond also from this point of view<sup>21</sup>. The Jews were also most interested in the elimination of Fascism and in democratization. The perspective of involvement in communism offered a shelter to the Jews, after the shock they suffered after the annulment of private propriety. The Hungarian Jewry took part more than the local inhabitants in the organs of administration and of governance that belonged to the Communists<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> John Kosa, "A century of Hungarian Emigration, 1850 – 1950", in *American Slavic and East European Review*, vol.16, No.4 (dec. 1957), pp. 501- 514, published by the The American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3000776>, accessed in 09/07/2010.

<sup>14</sup> Fejto Ferenc, *Magyarság, zsidóság ( Hungarians, Jews)*, Budapest, 2000, p. 282.

<sup>15</sup> Assimilation had as a finality also to approach the Hungarian culture. There were several writers of Jewish origin who became important names in Hungarian culture. Thus we recall Kertész Imre, Konrád Gyorgy, Nádas Péter. During the communist times, the majority of Hungarian Jewry had the tendency to hide their Jewish origin, wanted to be considered the same as Hungarians, not to exist no reason of discrimination or of difference of ethnical nature.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen J. Roth, "Indemnification of Hungarian victims of Nazism: an Overview", in Randolph L. Braham and Attila Pók (Ed.), *The Holocaust in Hungary. Fifty years later*, Columbia University Press, 1997, p. 733-753.

<sup>17</sup> Sources from Jewish Community of Oradea informed us that also in Romania it was created a Fund of Jewish Property administered by Jewish Community of Romania. For example, a great part of the houses of the deceased were administered by this fund, but it also had existed exceptions.

<sup>18</sup> Fejto Ferenc, *op.cit.*, p.276.

<sup>19</sup> Idem, *Behind the rape of Hungary*, David McKay, New York, 1957, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*. It is shown that many Jews who survived to Holocaust and were integrated in Security Services became the most important tyrants and loyal oppressors of communist governments, what made some contemporaries to consider that it was about a revenge of Jews on non-Jews.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 283.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*.

The wealthy Jewry suffered to the same extent as the Hungarian bourgeoisie<sup>23</sup>. They were deported, their goods were taken over by the state, a lot of them suffered in political prisons and lost their civil rights for a considerable time, etc. This is why when we want to evaluate the role played by the Jews in the communist system, we do not have to lose sight of the Jews that were oppressed by the Communists. In order to assimilate, many Jews passed to Christianity.

The Jews who chose not to assimilate were few. The most important form of the refusal of integration in the Hungarian Communist State, was Zionism. But the number of the Jews who choose to emigrate was smaller in Hungary, than in Romania<sup>24</sup>. The emigration was possible, mainly after 1945, and, for a short time. Also, only for a few years, in Hungary, the Zionist movement enjoyed liberty of action. In 1949, it was produced a radical change of the Hungarian state towards the Zionism and the Zionist organizations were abolished. The Zionist leaders were arrested. Zionism was condemned after a press campaign<sup>25</sup>. These events were coming on the fond of a change in the attitude of the USSR towards the Jews which reverberated in all communist space. Thus, in 1948, when the state of Israel was constituted, the Soviet Union was the first state whom acknowledged it. But when it became obvious the pro-western attitude of Israel, Soviet Union changed its politics. Starting with 1948, anti- Zionist manifestations took place in Poland and Romania. In Hungary, the anti- Zionist propaganda was sustained by the press. The Slanski trial from Czechoslovakia and the white gown affair from Soviet Union, marked in communist block the pick of anti-Semite politics.

The ones who were assimilated, had hoped that the communist party could level the discriminations to which they were submitted in the previous epochs and during the Holocaust. The Jews realized later the mistake of making a pact with the Stalinism. They tried to assimilate to the mass of overall population and never declared their Jewish origin. Gyurgyák János calls this phenomenon negative assimilation. The Jewish kids were never told about their origin. A great part of the Jewry started to abandon the Stalinism, thus in 1956 we find the Jews of both sides of the barricade<sup>26</sup>.

In the period 1944 - 1949, in Hungary it was produced Sovietization<sup>27</sup>. Stalin succeeded to make from Hungary, Romania, Poland, Cehoslovakia or Bulgaria some vassal states. In Hungary, the Sovietization was gradually introduced. A lot of Jews had important functions in Communist Party (Gerő Ernő, Révai József, Farkas Mihály, Rákosi Mátyás).

At December 2, 1944, it was constituted the Front of National Liberation formed from: Party of Smaller Agrarian Owners, Social Democratic Party, Bourgeois – Democratic Party and Communist Hungarian Party. The National Provisional Assembly empowered the Provisional Council with the signing of the armistice to January 20, 1945. In this period, they take the first measures against the Fascists politicians and of organizations of right wing. They were annulled anti- Jewish laws. It was created the Political Police (AVO) with a repressive role, lead by a Jew, Péter Gábor<sup>28</sup>. In Pécs, local population invaded the centre of Jewish community which they had considered responsible of

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<sup>23</sup> Kovács András, "Zsidóság az 1945. A zsidókérdés a mai Magyar társadalomban" ("The Jewry in 1945. The Jewish problem and the Hungarian problem of today" in vol. *1100 Eves Együttélés (1100 of years of common life)*, 2001, p. 14 shows that in the total of the population from Hungary, sent to Gulag, the Jews represented 30%.

<sup>24</sup> The Zionist movement activated in Hungary and during the Holocaust when it was succeeded the saving of some Jews. Fejto Ferenc, *op.cit.*, p.287, asserts that, during 1945-1947, left Hungary 28 103 Jews. When it ceased its existence (13 III, 1949), the communists considered its members as the fascists of Szalasi and arrested them. ( Kovács András, *Viata laolaltă de 1100 de ani*, p. 15). Also in Hungary, as in Romania, they took place anti- Zionist trials. Raphael Patai, *op.cit.*, shows that between 1945- 1947 left Hungary between one third and a quarter from the Hungarian Jews which survived in Hungary, 28 000 in Israel and together with the ones emigrated in Western Europe and overseas, a total of 56 000 of Jews. Gyurgyák János, *op.cit.*, p. 586 shows that between 1945 and 1947 approximatively 60 000 of Jews chose the path of emigration.

<sup>25</sup> Gyurgyák, *op.cit.*, p.588. Also in Romania the Zionists were persecuted by the communist state during with the year 1949. In the whole communist block the antisemite politics of Stalin reverberated in the last years of his life.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p 590.

<sup>27</sup> Romcsics Ignác, *Magyarország története. A XX Században (The history of Hungary. XX Century)*, Osiris Kiadó, Budapest, 2005, p. 273.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 281, shows that during the years 1945- 1950 almost 60 000 of people arrived in front of the appeal courts.

country's communization. In 1945, in Hungary they took place elections which were won by the Party of Smaller Agrarian Owners. This party represented the interests of the middle class and of the peasants. Until the next elections, in 1949, the opposition parties were thrown out from the political scene. The communists encouraged the creation of opposition parties in order to divide the political life and to undermine, thus, the Party of Small Peasants which enjoyed the most popular sympathy. In 1948, the workers parties got united, creating Hungarian Communist Party. Communism was introduced in Hungary initially by concessions made to the class of electors (the prove is the Agrarian reform from 1945)<sup>29</sup>. This aspect generated the sympathy of Occidentals towards the Hungarian communist regime. But, after 1948, Stalin interferes in Hungarian politics subordinating Hungary to his interests. In the same time with the affirmation of Tito, it started in Hungary the campaign against the political opponents of Rakosi who were criticized for their adhesion to *Titoism*. Such a process was the process of László Rajk<sup>30</sup>. Ulterior, on the fond of the pressure coming from USSR, Hungary abolished the treaty of assistance with Iugoslavia. The campaign against *Titoism* was sustained by press and radio.

In short time, the communists took over the whole power. First secretary of Communist Party became Rákosi Mátyás, a Jew instructed after the model of Stalin at Moscow. In 1949, it was created the Popular Front of Hungarian Liberation whose president was, at the beginning, Rákosi. In the summer of the year 1949, the communists took over the power.

Hungary regained its sovereignty, after the signing of the Treaty of Paris. On the territory of Hungary, there had remained 50 000 of Russian soldiers. The Soviet influence in Hungary was accelerated. The economic production of Hungary in the first years of communism decreased under the level it had before the First World War. The inflation of the year 1946 from Hungary conduced to the poverty of the population.

Jewish commercials who activated on black market of Budapest, saved the population of Budapest of hungriness<sup>31</sup>. Still, anti – Semitism increased in the context of general poverty. Thus, in 1946 in the localities of Kunmadaras and Miskolc, it took place anti-Semite manifestations<sup>32</sup>. The guilty persons were arrested. Once with the improvement of economic situation, they were not more anti-Semite manifestations, but the anti – Semitism remained in the mental of Hungarians.

In the period 1948- 1949, the factories were nationalized in Hungary. The properties detained of the Jews made no exceptions. In 1948, the government took the decision of the collectivization of agriculture. In time, religion was excluded from school education. The Jewish schools entered in the propriety of the state. After 1950, the Jews had just one High- School in the whole Hungary<sup>33</sup>.

In the time of the dictatorship of Rákosi, the dependence of Hungary of the Soviet Union was total. The political pluralism was restrained and, in time, it was demolished. In the pick of the party hierarchy was Rákosi Mátyás, prime secretary of the party. Political important body, the Political Committee was lead in 1950 by a *troika* formed from the Jews (Rákosi, Gero, Farkas). Rakosi accepted at the end of the years 1940, the cult of personality in the most pure Stalinist manner.

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<sup>29</sup> The architect of the agrarian reform was Nagy Imre, important character of the Revolution of 1956. The agrarian reform from 1945 made an advantage to small agricultors, 400 000 of peasants without land taking advantage of it. 200 000 of peasants received problem in plus. This reform came from the tactic of communist Party of not neglecting the peasants wishes. But, starting with the year 1948, shows Ferenc Fejto, *Behind...*, p. 14, the agricultors were encouraged to angrenate in agricultural cooperatives of production.

<sup>30</sup> Francois Fejto offers details about the process of Laszlo Rajk. This lasted only a few days and registered on the line of show trials lead by Rusia from the years 1930. The process opened at September 16 1949. In the Court room were several workers. Rajk acknowledged all the accusations that it was brought to him, including the accusation of titoism. He and three more persons were sentenced to death. Ulterior, Laszlo Rajk and the rest of the accused will be rehabilitated. Among the methods of intimidation there was also the phisical torture. Rajk told that if he did not acknowledged the accusations that were brought to him, the wife and the few months kid will be killed.

<sup>31</sup> Romcsics Ignac, *op.cit.*, p. 308.

<sup>32</sup> Raphael Patai, *op.cit.*, shows that in May 1946, it took place a antisemite action in the locality Kunmadaras. The Jews were accused of ritual murder. Two Jews were killed, and 18 ingered. At Miskolc it took place another antisemite action where the communist leader Mátyás Rákosi asked the death of Jewish commerciants which activated on black marked.

<sup>33</sup> Romcsics Ignác, *op.cit.*, p. 327.



The punishment of political rivals was achieved with the support of AVO (Committee for the State Safety), a repressive organism, which depended by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Initially AVO has a target the punishment of criminals of war, but, later, it had in view the opponents of communization. Centralized economy was introduced in Hungary with the stimulation of “contests of production”, between workers that put an accent more on quantity and not of quality. In the period 1950- 1954 the five years plan was applied. In agriculture the main objective was the close up of the process of collectivization. The agricultural cooperatives did not bring the expected results, because of the lack of the specialists and because of weak mechanization of the works.

On cultural plan the unique party took the monopoly. The political press which belonged to the other political formations was liquidated until 1949. The schools, printing houses, cinemas and the other cultural institutions were nationalized. The activity of church was more restrained. Religion was firstly facultative, later eliminated from education<sup>34</sup>. The press, the radio, the printing houses, the cinema received propagandistic tasks, contributing to the edification of socialist state. There were also eliminated the last Jewish reminiscences from culture.

After the death of Stalin, in March 1953, it started a fight between its political collaborators (Beria, Molotov, Malenkov, Bulganin, Hruščiov). After a severe confrontation between Malenkov and Hruščiov, the last took the power. Rakosi was criticized to Moscow because he did not submit to the new political directions launched by Soviet leadership. He was accused by excessive industrialization, increasing of army potential, forced collectivization, decrease of standards livings, fabricated processes of the political adversaries, the fact that he built a cult of personality of Stalinist type<sup>35</sup>. He was criticized because he maintained in leadership posts too many Jews<sup>36</sup>.

Henry Gleitman and Joseph J. Greenbaum<sup>37</sup> asserted that the purpose of their study is the analysis of the answers of the emigrants of Hungarian origin in United States with regard to the Revolution of 1956. Some questions examined to what extent, the interviewed make prove of ethnocentric attitudes, as for instance the anti –Semitism, having in view the recent history of Hungary. The interviewed must to be questioned concerning a few affirmations: “I believe that almost all the Jews fought on the side of revolution”, “I condemn firmly the behavior of most Jews during the years 1945- 1948”, “I condemn briefly the behavior of most Hungarian Jews during the years 1948-1956”, “A lot of Jews were against the communism as almost all the others”. According to the survey, the trust of Hungarian ethnics emigrated in United States in Jews was high, + 80. The most Hungarian refugees bypassed the problem of anti-Semitism.

William A. Bomberger and Gail E. Makinen<sup>38</sup> talk about the period after the Second World War when inflation was very high in Hungary. In his research, the author was helped by the professor Zrinyi by the Georgetown University, Aladar Szegedy – Maszak (the Hungarian minister in United States between the years 1945- 1946) and the professor William Fellner. The period of hyperinflation in Hungary was comprised between July 1945 and August 1946 when the prices rise with a factor of 3X10<sup>25</sup>. The economic crises by which Hungary passed after the war, was due to the fact that Hungary was a destroyed zone after the war. It have been existed a great material and alimentary scarcity. The Jews had an important role in supply, fact that generated new waves of anti-Semitism which finished sometimes with pogroms.

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 359.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 377.

<sup>36</sup> This criticism came in the continuation of the antisemite politics promoted by Stalin in the last years of his life. In URSS it took place the *white gowns affairs*, and in Czechoslovakia Slanski trial. Both events had as protagonists the Jews. In Hungary, the leader of AVO, Peter Gabor, of Jewish origin, was arrested.

<sup>37</sup> Henry Gleitman and Joseph J. Greenbaum, “Attitudes and personality patterns of Hungarian Refugees” in *The public opinion quaterly*, vol. 25, no.3 (autumn, 1961), pp. 351 -365, published by Oxford University Press on behalf of the American Association for Public Opinion Research; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2746364>, accessed on 09/ 07/2010.

<sup>38</sup> William A. Bomberger and Gail E. Makinen, „The Hungarian Hyperinflation and Stabilisation of 1945-1946”, in *The Journal of Political Economy*, vol.91, No.5, (oct, 1983), p. 801- 824, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1837370>, accessed 09/07/2010.

An important Hungarian historian, Raphael Patai<sup>39</sup> reflects the main coordinates of the existence of the Jews in Hungary. He dedicates a space also to postwar history of the Jews in Hungary in which he draws the directing lines of their activity in communist period.

Thus, for the period that followed to the end of the war, Patai approaches the problem of Jewish emigration from Hungary. This problem was an important one, because the Hungarian Jews had a lot of sufferings to bear as a consequence to fascism and of collaboration of Hungary with the Axis. In spite of this aspect, Patai underlines that the number of Jewish emigrants from Hungary remained small in comparison with the Jewish emigration from neighboring countries<sup>40</sup>.

Patai estimates that the Jewish population from Hungary was between 150 000 and 200 000 in 1945. Among these, he considers, that 56. 000 of Jews emigrated during the years 1945- 1947<sup>41</sup>. Two thirds from the Jews who survived to the war decided to remain in Hungary.

Another important aspect underlined by Patai was that, after 1950, emigration was stopped by communist dictatorship. The creation of the state of Israel was ignored by Hungarian communists.

Another problem existent in Hungary in 1945 are the discussions that existed in Hungary around the Jewish problem and of Holocaust, respectively the public declaration of Jewish sufferings and affirmation of Hungarian responsibility. Between the years 1945 and 1948, the problem of the Jews and of the genocide directed against the Jews made the subject of a public debate in Hungary, debate reflected by the articles, pamphlets and books published on this topic. In the period 1948- 1958, the Hungarian government prohibited the publication of books on this topic<sup>42</sup>. Moreover, the communists did not acknowledged that the Holocaust was directed against the particular group of Jews, but considered that it was about a persecution of fascists against non – fascists. This aspect is reflected also in the view of Romanian communists.

Also in Hungary, like in Romania, it had been existed Zionist leaders that militated for the emigration in Israel.

In both countries, these persons were persecuted and put into prison. Patai mentions the process Rajk that determined also a lot of victims from the Jews and that was followed by the persecution of Zionists leaders<sup>43</sup>. Also, during these years, to the Hungarian Jews it was prohibited the maintenance of the connections with the Jews from outside.

Patai tried to explain which were the reasons that caused Jewish adhesion to Communism. Thus he gives an explanation that many authors consider important, namely that the Jews received the Russians as liberators not as enemies as the Hungarian ethnics<sup>44</sup>.

Although they had the feeling that they are different, the Jews did not reject the assimilation by the Hungarian society. A lot of survivors that were Jews oriented towards communism. Another motivation of the adherence of Jews to communism, underlined by Patai, is the fact that these (the communists) considered bypassed the Jewish problem and the anti-Semitism. Moreover, they considered that the communist regime was incompatible with anti- Semitism, while Capitalism favored its proliferation<sup>45</sup>.

More than the Christians, shows the author, they occupied the newly created jobs. The persecution of bourgeoisie, did not exclude the Jewish bourgeois that were quite a few and were also deported<sup>46</sup>.

In the same time, in the first years after the war, Hungarian anti-Semitism found new possibilities of expression. They had been existed problems with the restitution of Jewish houses, occupied by Hungarians, during the Fascist period, and who did not want to give them back.

It was carried out a campaign against Jewish sellers that, shows Patai, culminated with anti-Jewish manifestations like the ones directed against Jewish sellers from Miskolc. Anti- Semite

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<sup>39</sup> Raphael Patai, *The Jews of Hungary. History, culture, psychology*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1996.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 613.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 615.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 616.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 624.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 625.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 626.



manifestations took place also to Diósgyőr where the miners were involved in manifestations against sellers on black market, mainly Jews<sup>47</sup>.

Anti-Semitism was increased by the fact that it existed important leaders of Communist Party of Jewish origin right immediately after the end of war such as Mátyás Rákosi, Erno Gero, Josef Revai, Zoltan Vass.

The author Raphael Patai remarks himself through his objectivity but also by the understanding of the psychological and social motivations of the Jewry to integrate and to accept communism. The picture of Jewish society, after the war, achieved by Patai is a complex one, detailed that that keep reviewed all the important details utilized in the field concerning the faith of Jewry after the war. It is a good psychologist and a fine observer of the Jewish world.

In what concerns the situation of Jewish minority in Romania<sup>48</sup>, after the war, after the setting of communism, the chief rabbi of Romania, Moses Rosen, confirms the existence of community life and religion during the whole communist period<sup>49</sup>. Although the activity of the synagogues and of Jewish community was not so intense as after the war, they continued to exist, inclusively represented by people involved in the Judaic cult, whom, at a certain moment, the rabbi stops them from emigration because they were needed in the country. It had been existed a lot of believers that continued to go to the Synagogue, although the Security infiltrated also here its sources of information, because "Jewish streets" had to be conquered.

A current practice of the communist power was the use of forced labor. In the camps of work from the whole country they were 80 000 of persons at the beginning of the years '50 from which 40 000 were exploited for the construction of the channel Danube – Black Sea: "Independent of its purpose, the project needed the biggest mobilization of forces from work camps in Romania, in which they were concentrated political prisoners from all the categories of society. People with superior education were working hand in hand with peasants who lost their land, Orthodox priests and united with Zionist leaders, Serbians from Banat, with Sași from Transylvania, all being victims of the infringement of human rights that went along with the program of the Romanian regime of political and economic revolution"<sup>50</sup>. At this Channel, they have been working also Zionist leaders, while the Jews suspected of Zionism that were free, were haunted, put under trial and persecuted.

## Table

The table from below shows us the number of Jewish population from Romania before and after the war<sup>51</sup>.

Region	1939	1941	1942	1947
Romania				
Present boundaries	478.042	466.128	427.296	428.312
Oltenia	3. 523	2.841	2.484	3.406
Muntenia	94.216	114. 470	108.761	163.144
Moldova	160.330	135.730	121.131	150.651
Dobrogea (without Southern Dobrogea)	3.185	2. 885	2.239	3.279
Southern Bucovina	23.844	18.140	179	17.388
Transylvania	18.929	15.720	15. 122	15.847

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>48</sup> See the article of Daniel Chirot, *Social Change in Communist Romania, Social Forces*, vol.57, No.2, Special Issue (Dec, 1978), p. 457- 499, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2577678>.

<sup>49</sup> Moses Rosen, *Primejdii, incercari, miracole*, Editura Hasefer, 1990, p. 16- 340.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, p.115.

<sup>51</sup> The table is taken over from Peter Meyer, Bernard D. Weinryb, Eugene Duschinsky, Nicolas Sylvain, *The Jews in the Soviet Satellites*, Syracuse University Press, 1953, p.516.

(without Northern Transylvania)				
Nord of Transylvania	148.294	151.125	152.228	44.706
Banat	14.043	14.626	14.009	15.963
Crișana	11.678	10.591	10.497	13.928

After the Political Act from August 23, 1944, the Jewry hoped to the Restoration of civil rights, restitution of the proprieties they had before the war and the possibility to accede to professions that they could not practice anymore in the period of the authoritarian regime during 1938- 1940 and Antonescian regime during 1940 – 1944: “An official decree from December 14, 1944 abolished <<racial laws>> adopted anterior. But, the decree restoring the full citizenship of Romanian Jews, failed in the establishment of the status of the Jews, refugees from the annexed territories. Only, after a lot of delays and continuous negotiations, an agreement was achieved at the end of 1946, between Romanian Ministry of Justice (then secretary of Romanian Communist Party, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu) and the leaders of Jewish communities in order to guarantee the citizenship of the refugees that, in 1938, had not the necessary papers in order to qualify for it”<sup>52</sup>. Also, the restitutions of the Jews of their fortunes was achieved with difficulty and not integrally<sup>53</sup>. In the same time, the Jews re-entered in the possession of their jobs from the public and private sector. Only the deportees and the refugees had to accept modest jobs.

Radu Ioanid shows that it is wrong to consider that the number of Communist Jews in Romania was high, showing that in 1923, from a total of 1655 of Communist members, only 364 were Jews and that represented 22.6%<sup>54</sup>. Also, Ioanid shows that in February 1946, the Jews represented only 5.3% from the party members<sup>55</sup>.

As in Hungary, the Jews from Romania had particular reasons to adhere to communism. In 1945, the option for communism meant an open attitude against the fascism, of which the Jews feared the most. Most Jews could not feel animosity towards Red Army or the Russians because they were the factors that freed them from the authoritarian regime of Ion Antonescu. A lot of Jews, traumatized by the horrors of Holocaust, became important personalities of Communist Party or, moreover, they aggregated in Romanian Security, terrorizing themselves the political opponents of the communism.

### Table

This table shows the number of people aggregated in the service of Romanian Security at its creation, in 1948, grouped on ethnies<sup>56</sup>:

Ethnie	Number/ percent of people aggregated in Security
Romanians	3.334 (83.9%)
Jews	338 (8.5%)
Hungarians	247 (6.2%)
Russians	24 (0.6%)

<sup>52</sup> Peter Meyer, Bernard D. Weinryb, Eugene Duschinsky, Nicholas Sylvain, *op.cit.*, p. 518.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, *op.cit.*, p.518 shows that a decree from December 14, 1944 established the next aspects, that all the propriety that belonged previously to the Jews and that is now detained by the state or in the possession of a buyer is regarded as belonging to the titular owner that was deprived from his propriety and returns to him without an additional legal procedure. The right of use of Jewish land is annulled at the promulgation of this decree. The author quotes another paragraph of the law that introduces limitations of Jewish propriety. Namely, the Jews can not return to their former places if the buildings are occupied by factories, artisan business and if the Jewish owners did not lived there before deportation.

<sup>54</sup> Radu Ioanid, *Răscumpărarea evreilor. Istoria acordurilor secrete dintre România și Israel*, Editura Polirom, 2005, p. 75.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 76.

<sup>56</sup> The table is taken over by Radu Ioanid, *Răscumpărarea evreilor. Istoria acordurilor secrete dintre România și Israel*, (The ransom of the Jews. The history of secret bargaining between Romania and Israel), Editura Polirom, 2005, p. 76.

Iugoslavians	13 (0.3%)
Others	17 (0.4%)
Total	<b>3.973</b>

In 1949, the Romanian Communists started a brutal campaign against the Zionist leaders. What was interesting, it was the fact that, although in the period that we study a big number of Jews emigrated in Israel, Zionist leaders, which tried to convince the Jewish population with the view of emigration and to accelerate the rhythm of emigration, were imprisoned, put under trial and tortured starting with the year 1949<sup>57</sup>. From 1949 until 1959 they were brought into the court around 250 of persons. The campaign is restarted in 1954, also Stalin died in 1953. Radu Ioanid illustrates very well this tendency of PCR to allow the emigration, but to oppose to Zionism.

The faith of Romanian and Hungarian Jews was far from good. With the exception of a minority, they were rather victims of communism than beneficiaries. The ones from Romania had emigrated to a larger extent, while in Hungary a lot of the Jews assimilated. We can conclude that, in Romania, the Communist regime was more permissive with the Jews.

We will signal a few memories that bring new information about the condition of Romanian Jews in the communist period, after the setting of communism in the Romanian state. Thus, Moses Rosen, in the work *Primejdii, încercări, miracole. Povestea vieții șef – rabinului Dr. Moses Rosen*<sup>58</sup>, describes his own life. Moses Rosen was chief rabbi of Romania during the communist times. The Journal covers also, the period that interests us, 1945- 1953. In his memories, he details his fight of mediator between the communist power and the large masses of Jews with the view of the facilitation of the emigration of Romanian Jews in Israel. The rabbi disposes by a special power of persuasion in front of communism, trying to convince them that the emigration of Romanian Jewry in Israel is a necessity. He plays a dangerous role, risking in every moment his liberty. The rabbi tries to stop the local Jewish leaders which were practicing the Judaic cult, to live out of the country in order to remain home and to ensure the religious service to the ones who did not want to leave.

Carol Buium Beniamini, in the work *Un sionist în vremea lui Antonescu și după aceea*<sup>59</sup>, describes his activity as Zionist. The author was Zionist in the most tensioned period for the Jews, before and after the Second World War in the framework of Zionist organisation Haşomer Hazair. A part of the Jewry believed, with naivity, to the communist ideas, while the majority tried to emigrate in their historical country, by making alya. Haşomer Hazair was one of the several Zionist movement appeared after the war.

The *Memories* of Carol Buium Beniamini had a foreword written by professor PhD Solomon Vaimberg who describes the situation in which he knew the author after the war, after the re-creation of the organization Haşomer Hazair. In the same time, dr. Solomon Vaimberg makes a portrait of the situation of Jewry in the postwar Romania that aspired, in spite of the existent difficulties, to emigrate in Israel: "For the regime, the Jews had become a minority hardly to assimilate who did not fit nor by social origin among the privileged categories of the new leadership. The ones who tried to request alya were brutally sanctioned by loosing their jobs, elimination from schools and faculties, exclusion from political life and civil life, as a rule. Disimulated discriminated – as "Zionists" or not dissimulated as a consequence of the brutally called measures for improvement of national ethnic composition, marginalized as "small- bourgeois", pushed towards the status of second rank citizens, the Jews confronted with frustration even from the perspective from their promotion in their specific fields of activity"<sup>60</sup>. Solomon Vaimberg considers that the Jews were not among the preferred categories of the communist regime, but among the ones persecuted by this regime. In what concerns Carol Buium Beniamini, he was detained together with other Zionists from the movement Haşomer Hazair in the prisons from Malmaison, Jilava and Văcărești in the period of antonescian regime (14 March 1942-august 1944). The leaders of the Zionist movement, once freed, contributed to the re-creation of

<sup>57</sup> Teodor Wexler, "Procesele sioniștilor" (The Zionists Trials) in Romulus Rusan (ed), *Anii 1954- 1960. Fluxurile și refluxurile stalinismului*, p. 380. shows that the anti- Zionist movements started since 1948.

<sup>58</sup> Moses Rosen, *Primejdii, încercări, miracole. Povestea șef-rabinului Dr. Moses Rosen*, (*Dangers, tryings, miracles. The story of chief rabbi Moses Rosen*), Bucharest, Editura Hasefer, 1991.

<sup>59</sup> Carol Buium Beniamini, *Un sionist în vremea lui Antonescu și după aceea*, Bucharest, Hasefer 1999.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 14.

Zionist organisations after the war: Haşomer Hazair, Bnei Avoda and Mişmar. In a period when the movement of resistance against fascism was reduced in Romania, the organisation Haşomer Hazair played an important role. The author was a member of the organization Haşomer Hazair since 13 years old.

Carol Buium Beniamini shows the main directions of action of the Youth members of the organisation by describing his personal experience: “As a lot of other young people, girls and boys, at the adolescence years what retained our attention as members of the youth organization was the sincere friendship, the joy of life, the songs, the dances and the trips; the youth ambiance; the discussions about <<platonic love>> and the respect of the ten tasks of the movement Haşomer Hazair. In the same time, we listened to conferences, *sihot* in our language, about Freud and Adler who tried to get inside the secrets on consciousness and unconsciousness, the secrets of human soul. We discussed and commented the problems of the evolution and of the revolutions which constituted the base of dialectic development of the society and of history – from the French Revolution and until our days. We tried to get inside of the profundity of the philosophy and of the historical determinism, talking with passion about the role of personality in history. We made an immense endeavour to explain and to interpret the existence and the development of the Jewish people during two thousand years of history of the diaspora [...]. We created also the synthesis between Zionism and socialism, whose culminant point must be the achievement of a society based on equality and fraternity, deprived of the exploitation of the man by the man: this ideal society was for us the *chibutz*, built by us, in the country of our people, Israel<sup>61</sup>”.

In his memories, Carol Buium Beniamini furnishes also a few documents that accuse of communist orientation the members of the movement Haşomer Hazair. The movement Haşomer Hazair organized several summer camps in the post-war period with the purpose of educating Zionist Youth with the view of emigration: “The summer camp in the year 1945 was in Tazlău, Neamţ county; a series of wooden cabans – that served or where built to serve to the German army- suited us as shelter. The war ended before the finishing of cabbans constructions. In the year 1946, the summer camp took place near Reghin, in Transylvania, in one of the palaces almost in ruin, of a Hungarian nobleman, the owner of a huge farm. The house was built in the midst of a beautiful park, having enough space to host a few, hundreds of young people *şomrim*”.

In the year 1947, the Youth movement Haşomer Hazair together with the sister movements – Bnei Avoda and Mişmar knew an impressive development. In May 1947, it was foreseen the participation of over one thousand young people and adults. It had been necessary thus to find a sufficiently large place to include all participants<sup>62</sup>. Finally, the author emigrated illegally in Israel.

Şlomo Şitnovitzer, in his writing *Documentul autentic sau amintiri din închisorile comuniste din România*<sup>63</sup>, describes the years he spent as a Zionist prisoner in the prisons from Romania “at Jilava, at Malmaison, at Piteşti, at Caransebeş, at Rahova”<sup>64</sup>. His arrestment happened in 1950, during a trip to Buşteni, when a few men of the Security took him to Bucharest in order to make some investigations. Captured in prison, he describes the atmosphere from there asserting that the purpose of the investigations was “to force, with any price, the accused to acknowledge his blames, namely the fact that he acted against state order, and, moreover, he was a spy [...]”. During the investigations, the officer also tried a psychological pressure on the accused, explaining to him that he was not an ordinary accused, but “the main leader of the important organization Bethar which had a severe military discipline being enough that me, the authoritarian and all mighty leader of this movement to push a button to make the thousands of members of this organization to start a <<a revolution against the state order>><sup>65</sup>. About the Security investigations the author asserts that their extreme form was to send the accused in the caves of Security, terrifying rooms. In fact, the novel, a diary of the years spent into prisons, says that: “There were times when the investigations were stopped as said the authorities, when they did not succeed to come out of you not only what they would have liked, but not even a part; and this after a period of months and months. Then, they send you back in the Security

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, p.20.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 129.

<sup>63</sup> Şlomo Şitnovitzer, *Documentul autentic sau amintiri din închisorile comuniste din România*, Tel Aviv, 2003.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 10.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem*, p.18-19.

caves with the slogan “you are going to stay there until you will die”. And they live you there a certain time with the hope that the time will pass and you will get tired and finally you will be decided to talk. It was a sort of punishment coming from the authorities, because formally everybody wanted to put an end to this sufferance, to be judged and send to prison where life was still a little more bearable”<sup>66</sup>. But not all the days were so terrifying. The prison was also a good way to socialize and to talk with the colleagues.

In the work *Speranțe în întuneric. Memorii*, it is shown that Valentin Saxone (Jew) was deprived by his right to exert his profession of lawyer to 20 April 1948, fact that the author explains by “the reasons that it was pursued the suppression of the right of fascist elements to practice this profession no more – and in consequence they were deprived of the right to be lawyers all the ones that were not wanted by the communist regime, all the ones that were not regimented or they did not work – as I said- under the guise of <<long way comrades>>”<sup>67</sup>. Ulterior he found that he was followed by a member of Security, who approached his family in this sense. He was suspended from profession for 10 years. The author dedicated a chapter to his activity after August 23, 1944. King Mihai annulled the discriminatory measures existent during the Antonescian regime. The author is one of the initiators of the Club “Idea” which grouped several intellectuals who wanted to get into contact with the Christian population and to combat fascism and anti-Semitism. But the activity of “Idea” Club was short, because at the end of 1947 the Communist Party prohibited the activity of political organizations with cultural character. Another chapter is dedicated to Popular Romanian Party and to the elections from 1946 when, together with a friend, Petre Ghiață militated for the creation to Popular Peasants Party that became Popular Romanian Party not to be confunded with National Party of Peasants whose leaders were Iuliu Maniu and Ion Mihalache, among these two political formations being also differentiations of ideological nature. For several times Valentin Saxone was accused of “bourgeois origin”, and from 1962 he is detained to Jilava under the accusation that he fought against the Socialist Revolution and he was also a Spy.

These *memories* presented about the Jews captured in communist prisons reveal the difficulty of the survival of Jewish Community and its leaders and members during communist times when aspirations as emigration to Israel were considered as crimes against the communist state of Romania. In the presentation “Judaism means the connection with the past, present and future”<sup>68</sup> from the site of the Federation of Jewish Communities from Romania, there are accentuated the last 70 years of life of Jewish Community of Romania in which this Community confronted with the Holocaust, Fascism, communism.

From 800 000 of Jews shows the survey, 400 000 of Jews survived in the whole Romania to Holocaust and from these 90% emigrated to Israel during the whole communist period. It is obvious that the Jews did not identify with the party and communist state.

With very few members, local Jewish Communities of Romania continue their activity. Presently, the great rabbi of Jewish Communities from Romania is the rabbi Menachem Hacohen.

In the report of the Council of Leadership concerning the activity of Jewish Federation from the period May 2013 – March 2014, the Jewish Community of Romania tried to survive in the context generated by the economic crises in Romania. The Jewish Community was concerned with: preservation of patrimony, programs of education and social assistance, religious life, Judaic education, international relations.

An important objective of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Oradea was to take attitude against anti- Semitism or against the denials of Holocaust.

Jewish Community of Romania was financially supported by the international organization JOINT. Presently, the number of the members of Jewish Communities of Romania is 7350 from which 4285 are the Jews according to a census of 2013. Presently the Jewish Community in Romania has four rabbis: in Bucharest, in Oradea, in Iași and in Brașov. The Jewish Community in Romania has a Printing House, HASEFER and a journal, *Realitatea evreiască*.

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*, p.43.

<sup>67</sup> Valentin Saxone, *Speranțe în întuneric. Memorii* (text îngrijit de Liana Saxone Horodi) (*Hopes in the darkness. Memmories*), Editura Viitorul Românesc, Bucharest, 2004, p.13-14.

<sup>68</sup> See the site of Jewish Federation of Communities from Romania, [www.jewishfed.ro](http://www.jewishfed.ro), accessed in September 10, 2014.

The president of the Federation of Jewish Community of Oradea, is engineer Felix Kopellman, the community being the second in the country as a number of members and having around 700 members.